

ART *at*
EQUITABLE
CENTER



Occupying the entire block between Sixth and Seventh Avenues and 51st and 52nd Streets in midtown Manhattan, Equitable Center comprises the new Equitable Tower at 787 Seventh Avenue, designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes and Associates, and the PaineWebber Building at 1285 Avenue of the Americas designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. The Center, owned and developed by The Equitable, is a unique complex devoted to the display of art and to public amenities.

EXHIBITION SPACES

The **Whitney Museum of American Art at Equitable Center**, sponsored by The Equitable, is the largest of the Museum's four branches, consisting of two 3,000-square-foot galleries. The North Gallery features long-term installations of works from the Whitney's permanent collection, while the South Gallery houses temporary exhibitions of art drawn primarily from outside the Museum's collection. Museum hours are from 11AM–6PM Monday through Friday, Thursdays until 7:30PM, and Saturdays from Noon–5PM. Admission is free. For further information about current exhibitions call: (212) 554-1113.

The **PaineWebber Art Gallery** is both sponsored and operated by the PaineWebber Group, Inc. The space was established to enable non-profit arts and cultural organizations to acquaint a midtown audience with their collections and activities. Gallery hours are from 8AM–6PM, Monday through Friday. Admission is free. For more information call: (212) 713-2885.

PHOTO: S. COLLINS



Whitney Museum of American Art at Equitable Center : "American Mastery" installation view

**Right: Roy Lichtenstein, *Mural with Blue Brushstroke*. 1984–85
Acrylic on canvas**

Scott Burton, Atrium Furnishment. 1984–85



PERMANENT INSTALLATIONS

ATRIUM

Roy Lichtenstein's monumental work **Mural with Blue Brushstroke** was executed on site by the artist and is his largest work to date. The mural is a compendium of the Pop artist's signature images and those of other twentieth century masters. Among the various motifs are several discrete visual puns, such as the large brushstroke that gives the painting its title, which is at once a reference to the gestural style of the Abstract Expressionists and an image of falling water, the source of the liquid that wets the sponge adjacent to it. This sponge, in turn, appears to be wiping away the mural's paint, revealing a row of painted windows similar in appearance to those ranged around the Atrium courtyard.

Atrium Furnishment is one of three works in Equitable Center by Scott Burton, whose innovative designs combining architecture, sculpture, and furniture have made him a leader in the public art movement. *Atrium Furnishment* consists of a 40-foot semi-circular settee of verde larisa marble studded with pink onyx lights, a circular table fountain containing various aquatic flora, and a dense screen of Podocarpus trees (a tropical conifer) whose semi-circular arrangement complements the settee's arc-like form. The entire ensemble is surrounded by an 11-inch wide, broken circle of polished bronze embedded in the floor.

Burton worked closely with the building architect Edward Larrabee Barnes to fully integrate the installation into the space. The artist added red granite pavers to the Atrium's white marble floor in a pattern that repeats *Atrium Furnishment's* circular form, thereby reconciling the juxtaposition of the square Atrium to Burton's circular work. The result is the creation of a space that provides a sense of enclosure and retreat in a busy urban environment.

PHOTO DOROTHY ZEIDMAN



Thomas Hart Benton, "City Building" (from *America Today*). 1930
Tempera on linen



Paul Manship, *Day*. 1938, Bronze

CORRIDORS

Thomas Hart Benton's **America Today** mural, commissioned by the New School for Social Research in 1930, presents a panoramic view of the nation, reflecting the America Benton encountered on his summer sketching trips through the country's back roads and small towns during the 1920s. Purchased by The Equitable in 1984, and completely restored before its installation, the mural originally adorned the boardroom walls of the New School where it established Benton's reputation as the country's foremost Regionalist painter. The project sparked a renewed interest in mural painting and helped precipitate the wide-reaching mural program of the federal government's Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the 1930s.

America Today's ten panels describe Benton's interpretation of the nation's economic and social life during a period of dramatic industrial growth. The first and last panels, entitled "City Activities with Dance Hall" and "City Activities with Subway," depict the raucous and licentious aspects of urban pastimes during the "roaring twenties." The second, third and fourth panels from the left, entitled respectively, "City Building," "Coal," and "Steel," commemorate the country's workers and its major industries. "Instruments of Power," the mural's central and largest panel, is an optimistic vision of technological progress in transportation and energy production, while "Changing West," Midwest," and "Deep South," in that order to the right of the center panel, portray three of the nation's geographical regions and the industrialization for which they are known. "Outreaching Hands," which hangs opposite the other panels, was originally located above the boardroom doorway at the New School. This is Benton's only panel that, in its portrayal of a poorhouse and breadline, suggests the effects of the Depression. It was the last to be painted, probably in 1931 or 1932, when the Depression was fully felt. Just as *America Today's* first nine panels provide an encyclopedic view of the nation during one of its carefree periods, its final segment represents the bleak reality of the country as it entered one of its darkest eras.

Paul Manship's **Day** originally formed part of a quartet of sculptures designed in 1938 and entitled *The Moods of Time*. The works, of bronze, were the basis for a similar, larger set cast a year later for the 1939 New York World's Fair. Stylistically, *Day* is typical of Manship's later works, in which elegantly streamlined forms predominate, revealing his indebtedness to the Art Deco style of the period in which he worked.

Manship received many prestigious public commissions, among them the *Prometheus* fountain at Rockefeller Center, which he completed in 1934 and which continues to symbolize a commitment to the marriage of art and architecture.

GALLERIA

At mid-block, Equitable Center's Galleria links Equitable Tower with the PaineWebber Building. This space is the site for a group of six wall drawings by Sol LeWitt, a leader in both the Conceptual and Minimalist art movements. LeWitt's drawings for Equitable Center are his only permanent works on public display in New York. Entitled **Wall Drawing: Bands of Lines in Four Colors and Four Directions, Separated by Gray Bands** the drawings were first planned in watercolor and later translated to acrylic on limestone.

The drawings' title functions as their literal description, an arrangement common in LeWitt's work. The wall drawings are based on the serial variation of the four



PHOTO: GIANFRANCO GORGONI

Above: Barry Flanagan, *Young Elephant*. 1985, Bronze

Right: Sandro Chia, *Palio*. (detail) 1985–86
Acrylic on canvas

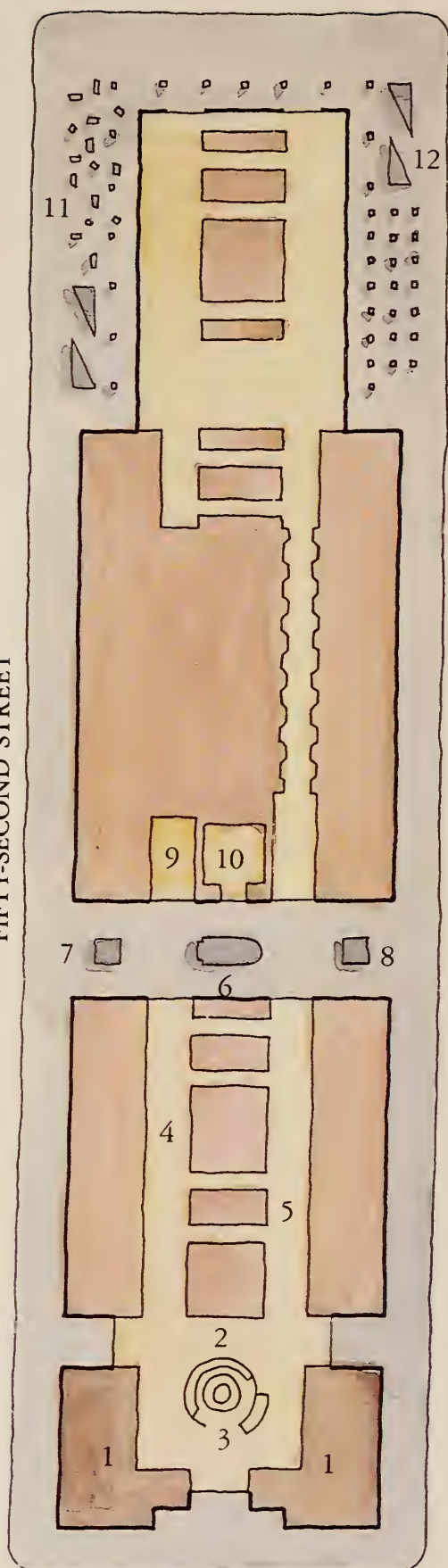


SIXTH AVENUE

ART at EQUITABLE CENTER

FIFTY-SECOND STREET

FIFTY-FIRST STREET



SEVENTH AVENUE

1. *Whitney Museum of American Art at Equitable Center*
2. *Mural with Blue Brushstroke*
Roy Lichtenstein
3. *Atrium Furnishment*
Scott Burton
4. *America Today*
Thomas Hart Benton
5. *Day*
Paul Manship
6. *Wall Drawing: Bands of Lines in Four Colors and Four Directions Separated by Gray Bands*
Sol LeWitt
7. *Young Elephant*
Barry Flanagan
8. *Hare on Bell*
Barry Flanagan
9. *Hypersphere: The Earth in the Shape of the Universe*
Agnes Denes
10. *Palio*
Sandro Chia
11. *Urban Plaza North*
Scott Burton
12. *Urban Plaza South*
Scott Burton

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elemental straight lines—horizontal, vertical, and the two diagonals—which are delineated by the primary colors red, blue, and yellow, and the tonal range—from white to gray and into black. They consist of varying combinations of this distilled system of line and color: each panel presents a different arrangement of color, tone, and line. As in other works by LeWitt, the artist has here reduced the vocabulary of painting to its sparest components.

British sculptor Barry Flanagan's **Young Elephant** and **Hare on Bell**, dating from 1986 and 1985 respectively, are positioned at the north and south ends of the Galleria, where they are surrounded by granite benches. A minimalist artist during the 1960s, Flanagan later began creating sculptures in a more representational style. He articulates a private mythology of animal images through a characteristic wiry line, always with a sense of wry humor, as seen in the delightful pose of the hare atop the elephant in *Young Elephant*. The hare also figures prominently in *Hare on Bell* where it is similarly grounded to a large and heavy form, thereby creating in both pieces a sense of tension between the hare's qualities of swift, agile movement and the weight to which it is anchored.

Agnes Denes' **Hypersphere: The Earth in the Shape of the Universe** was commissioned in 1986 by the First National Bank of Chicago for the lobby of their New York headquarters in the Equitable Tower. Consisting of 144 carved and frosted glass panels ranged over the lobby ceiling, as well as mirrors, plantings, and the design of the lobby's security desk, the various elements of *Hypersphere* combine to form a total environment. Its title refers to the image etched on the glass: backlit, the image is a luminous map of the earth, showing the seven continents reshaped into the doughnut-like configuration of Einstein's universe. Bronze-tinted mirrors affixed to the side walls create the illusion of infinite space.

Sandro Chia's mural **Palio**, in the Italian restaurant of the same name, is his largest work to date. The four-panel work encircles the walls of the restaurant's bar area, designed by Raul de Armas of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. *Palio* is based upon a centuries-old biannual horserace still run in Siena, Italy, in which bareback riders representing the 17 contrade, or counties of the region, race around the city's Piazza da Campo. Chia's mural celebrates the event's pageantry, from the opening parade of horses and riders—resplendent in period costumes, symbolic emblems, and colorful banners and flags—through the race itself, the presentation of winners afterwards, and the ritual bacchanalia that concludes the event.

Chia, a native of Florence, is generally grouped with younger European artists who emerged on the international scene during the early 1970s. Loosely described as "neo-expressionist," Chia tends to freely incorporate the styles and images of past art in his work. *Palio* exemplifies this, as both the theme of the mural and its scale have afforded Chia with an ideal context in which to reflect on the rich tradition of Italian art and history.

Right: Agnes Denes, *Hypersphere: The Earth in the Shape of the Universe*. Dedicated January 14, 1987, 144 panels, carved frosted pink rosa glass in two layers



URBAN PLAZAS

Scott Burton's, **Pair of Urban Plazas** is the most recent commission to be completed for Equitable Center. Both *Urban Plaza North* and *Urban Plaza South* complement the style and materials of the PaineWebber Building. The gray-green granite benches, stools, and tables relate to the building's exposed steel piers, while the litter receptacles and drinking fountain, of Milford Pink granite, conform to the identically-paved sidewalk encircling the structure. *Urban Plaza South* was conceived as a sidewalk cafe, using



PHOTO: ARI MARCOPOULOS

Above: Scott Burton, *Urban Plaza South*. 1985–86

Cover: Barry Flanagan, *Hare on Bell*. 1983 Bronze

Cover: Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing: Bands of Lines in Four Colors and Four Directions Separated by Gray Bands*. 1984–85 (detail)

Acrylic on limestone, six panels

simple, geometric shapes to form rows of stools and tables in a grid-like plan, oriented to the street. Two triangular planters contain Sargent Weeping Hemlock trees and provide additional seating. *Urban Plaza North* is composed of materials similar to those of its counterpart, but features benches of varying lengths. These are arranged to stimulate sociability while providing axial views of the surrounding cityscape. *Pair of Urban Plazas* provides a rare midtown meeting place in one of the world's busiest thoroughfares.

